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## A Critical Comparative Analysis of Post-global English Language Education: The Cases of Korea and Japan

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**Christopher Samuelli**

*Hannan University, Matsubara, Japan*

**Mike Smith**

*Kwansei Gakuin University, Nishinomiya, Japan*

In Northeast Asia, as in many other regions, local administrations have interpreted English language acquisition as central to enhancing national competitiveness within the currently dominant neoliberal-financial paradigm. Against this background, this comparative analysis critically reviews the structural and ideological processes by which global English impacts the Japanese and Korean educational domains, employing the linguistic imperialism framework (Phillipson, 1992) as its principal theoretical lens. In doing so, this inquiry aims to respond to local calls (see Kubota, 1998) for comprehension of the sociocultural impact of global English within economically developed, neo-colonial contexts. As a comparative study, this report focuses on neighboring settings in an effort to draw attention to the friction between the obligation to learn English for local empowerment and the underlying inequities that are strengthened by ELT locally. Through close examination of the conditions presented by Japanese and Korean academics, it is determined that the sustained transmission of globalization discourse has been a primary impetus in communicating, from the state level to the public, the symbolic worth of ELL. The pluralistic representation of internationalization and Englishization acts not only as a mechanism for countering global tensions but as a tool for elite privilege fortification, sustaining circular socioeconomic inequity based on linguistic competence, thereby depriving learners of authentic agency when “electing” to participate in ELL.

*Keywords:* comparative analysis, sociolinguistics, World Englishes, social reproduction

## INTRODUCTION

The agency supporting the supranational positionality of the English language has long provoked a complex, often heated dialogue within the field of sociolinguistics. An increasing number of scholars (e.g., Holbrow, 1992; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), interpret global English as a vehicle for the deliberate propagation of structural and social inequalities, representing a complot form of cultural hegemony that serves to strengthen the underlying conditions that maintain asymmetrical power relations on both the local and international levels. Conversely, academics such as Davies (1996) and Crystal (2012) maintain the position that the language has, in a contemporary context, “play[ed] a central role in empowering the subjugated and marginalized, and eroding the division between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’” (Crystal, 2012, p. 28). However, even such moderate accounts recognize English language dissemination as entwined with historical colonial exploitation and as being replicated globally as a partial result of local policy enactments reactionary to the external pressures of globalization.

In reaction to this process, Phillipson composed his controversial, yet undoubtedly influential *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), which details the alleged mechanisms by which English language teaching (ELT) distorts ideological discourses within the sphere of globalized educational practice – to the advantage of English and the disadvantage of broader language ecologies (Phillipson, 2008a). Specifically, global English is framed as a key mechanism of social reproduction, interlocking with political, educational, and financial systems and structures that strengthen the “hegemonic paradigms and monolingual control that consolidate Anglophonic power in the information society and the knowledge economy” (Phillipson, 2011, p. 442). From this perspective, the sustained dominance of English acts as a point of ingress for the interests of local and foreign élites, facilitating a transnational structure of exploitation and cultural marginalization constituting a “new form of empire that consolidates a single imperial language” (Phillipson, 2010, p. 487). Linguistic imperialism may thus be interpreted as “the dominance of English asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47).

Whilst linguistic imperialism’s frame of analysis focuses on post-colonial settings within the Global South – notably detailing the

impact of English on cultures native to the African and South Asian locales – it is also applied increasingly to neo-colonial contexts in which English is commonly framed as “the language of modernity, technological progress, and national unity” (Phillipson, 2010, p. 487), and participation in the global knowledge economy. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that accounts proposing the micro-level presence of linguistic imperialism have cast their attention predominantly towards economically disadvantaged settings, arguing that the dissemination of English has strengthened enduring structural inequalities established during the Age of Imperialism. Subsequently, academics from affluent nations in which English is consumed as a second or foreign language (ESL and EFL, respectively) have suggested that reports describing the ideological structuring of ELT within those contexts lack an adequate body of research (Kubota, 1998).

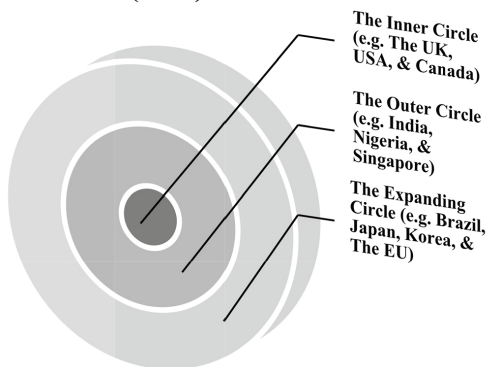
Two societies in which globalization, foreign language policy, and neoliberal ideologies pertaining to human capital development have visibly intersected are Japan and the Republic of Korea (henceforth, Korea). Ranked third and twelfth globally with regards to their respective gross domestic products (World Bank, 2017), the developmental strategies of both nations, manifesting per an outward vision of globalization (*Gurōbaruka*<sup>1</sup> and *Segyehwa*, respectively), emphasize the capital of English language learning (ELL) in order to realize national interests within the currently dominant neoliberal economic paradigm. Despite English’s position within these neighboring settings, the language neither retains official language status nor is it a second language (L2) employed during the institutional purposes of Japanese or Korean government. Yet, this distinctly foreign product is so entrenched within Japanese education that “over ten million twelve-to-eighteen-year-olds, and another million or so university students, have *no choice*<sup>2</sup> but to study English” (Horiguchi et al., 2015, pp. 6–7). Additionally, proficiency in English has been described as a key expression of Korean cultural capital with regard to competitiveness, emerging as a determinative factor in the quantification of individual value per neoliberal discourses detailing “appropriate” forms of citizenship (Cho, 2017, pp. 18–19). As a consequence, academics (see Song, 2011; Jeon, 2012) routinely interpret ELL appropriation as being hegemonically structured by local élites to facilitate self-aggrandizing outcomes, most notably with regard to the maintenance of social reproduction (Song, 2011).

In reaction to this process, this inquiry proposes a comparative investigation of the sociological impact of English language appropriation within these neighboring settings, employing features of the linguistic imperialism framework (Phillipson, 2008b, 2011) as its theoretical frame of analysis. Specifically, the contextual factors surrounding the ideological and material structuring of English within Japan and Korea will be analyzed in order to answer calls by local academics (see Kubota, 1998) for the provision of a broader understanding of English language hegemony, with specific reference to the accommodation of elite-driven globalized foreign language policy. In doing so, this comparative analysis will attempt to provide a parallel demonstration of linguistic imperialism within neighboring contexts to draw attention to the tension between the requirement to learn English for local empowerment (Phillipson, 2009) and, more broadly, the structural inequalities that are reinforced by ELT within these settings.

## THE INTERNATIONAL POSITIONALITY OF ENGLISH

Braj Kachru's "Three Circles of English" (1985, 1992), displayed in Figure 1, represents perhaps *the* authoritative model for describing the historical diffusion of English and its ensuing status within diverse cultural settings. Specifically, Kachru (1985) interprets global English in terms of three concentric circles, representing "the type of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages" (Kachru, 1985, p. 12).

FIGURE 1. Braj Kachru's (1985) Model of Concentric Circles



The *Inner Circle* denotes the sociolinguistic bases of English, including Anglosphere nations that initiated or received the first diaspora of British colonists, resulting in the permanent modification of population and linguistic structures across the globe. Settings incorporated within the inner circle include, but are not limited to, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and New Zealand – with their linguistic codes designated as *norm-providing* due to their longstanding role as the primary first language (L1) in each respective locale. The *Outer Circle*, meanwhile, represents those countries subjected to British imperial expansionism during the second diaspora. Due to the colonial legacy of English within these nations, the language is commonly recognized as an official L2, employed predominantly in multilingual contexts, such as education and legislation. These countries are said to be *norm-developing* and include settings such as India, Pakistan, Kenya, and Singapore. Finally, the *Expanding Circle* refers to territories with no history of inner circle colonization, including Brazil, Japan, Korea, and non-Anglophone Europe. English holds no distinct socio-historic status or institutional function within these settings and is acquired primarily as a vehicle for intercultural communication within the various spheres of global activity, such as trade, finance, and diplomacy. Owing to the lack of consistent standardization throughout the expanding circle, constituent locales are interpreted as *norm-dependent*, relying heavily on inner circle models, such as British or American Standard English, when codifying context-specific EFL norms (Saraceni, 2015, p. 51).

## THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM

Prior to detailing linguistic imperialism's frame of analysis, it is appropriate that terminology central to Phillipson's (1992) critique be addressed. For instance, throughout his narrative, Phillipson consistently employs the term *Centre* to denote those dominant inner circle locales that maintain the pre-eminence of English in order to impose Anglo-centric sociocultural, political, and economic models throughout the outer and expanding circles, collectively referred to as the *Periphery*. Thus, the Centre-Periphery model serves as a spatial metaphor, used to illustrate and clarify the relationship between language transfer and unequal distribution of structural power (Marshall, 1998, p. 71) by virtue

of English's position as a primary gatekeeper to education, employment, and social mobility (Ferguson, 2006). Nonetheless, while the term *Centre* is employed predominantly as a means of distinguishing the Anglosphere, the sustained consumption and reproduction of English by Periphery speakers has, according to Phillipson (2011), resulted in their complicit legitimization of ELL, its social norms, and hegemonic structures of global inequality and dependency.

Mechanisms supporting linguistic imperialism are reinforced operationally and ideologically by both L1 English speakers and partisan users of ESL and EFL within the outer and expanding circles. Periphery actors key to this process include local policymakers and business leaders – referred to by Phillipson (1992, p. 55) as “counterparts and collaborators” – who establish or retain the dominant role of English to generate “élite formation and privilege” (Phillipson, 2012, p. 215) – commonly via stratified education systems and the vocational necessity for costly English language proficiency measures, such as TOEIC or TOEFL. In facilitating this process, outer and expanding circle élites are characterized as context-specific Centres, assimilated into the hegemonic structuring of English to their benefit and the detriment of broader subaltern populations. Moreover, given that English within this context has emerged as a leading indicator of socioeconomic mobility (Phillipson, 2012), the enduring legacy of linguistic hierarchization has resulted in Periphery élite status being inextricably linked to proficiency in the neo-colonialist language – leading Phillipson (1997) to theorize that English linguistic imperialism is an Anglosphere-emanating process that presupposes and enhances underlying structures of asymmetrical social reproduction within the Periphery.

The theoretical foundations of linguistic imperialism, therefore, represent a blend of Galtung's (1971) *structural theory of imperialism*, and Gramsci's (1992) concept of *cultural hegemony* which, to use Bourdieusian terms, describes the process by which a ruling class exerts dominance over its broader field via the manipulation of cultural capital contained within. In doing so, the élite-driven cognitive orientation, or *weltanschauung*, imposed on that society is gradually accepted as benefitting all social classes, thereby representing a universally valid and unquestionable orthodoxy, or *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977), that justifies the dominant social, political, and economic hegemon. Accordingly, language represents a vehicle by which Centrist actors regulate the Periphery, playing a significant function in the processes by which

hierarchies are negotiated and structured during social reproduction. In this regard, linguistic imperialism may be viewed through the broader lens of *linguicism* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988), a concept parallel to discriminatory social constructs, such as racism and sexism, that describes “ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, p. 13).

As noted by Skutnabb-Kangas (2015), unequal access to power and resources is frequently multicausal, with instances of linguicism often intersecting with societal injustice in terms of economic, ethnic, and gender inequality. In keeping with dialectics of social exclusion, linguicism may be supported consciously or unconsciously, be both concrete or abstract, and manifest via overt or covert means (Phillipson, 1992). Regardless of its mechanism of delivery, however, linguicism and, by extension, *linguistic imperialism*, serves to simultaneously privilege those with convertible linguistic capital in the dominant language and restrict those who do not (Phillipson, 2011). Undoubtedly, the pattern of activities that facilitates this process is multifaceted and anchored to a range of factors, most notably the material and symbolic organization of ELT. To that end, the theoretical lens of this review comprises the following<sup>3</sup> features of Phillipson’s (1992, 2011) narrative – detailed here in Table 1 – which describe the structural and ideological procedures by which linguistic imperialism serves the Centre (Phillipson, 2011, p. 2).

**TABLE 1. The Abridged Pattern of Linguistic Imperialism**

| Indicators of Linguistic Imperialism   |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It is structural: More material resources and infrastructure are accorded to the dominant language than to others.”</li> <li>• “It is ideological: Beliefs, attitudes, and imagery glorify the dominant language, stigmatize others, and rationalize the linguistic hierarchy.”</li> </ul> |

Adapted from Phillipson (2011, p. 2).

English is not solely a neutral vehicle for intercultural communication: “It is a value one identifies with for the social functions the language is seen as serving, its utility in the linguistic market” (Phillipson, 2009, p. 109). Thus, the spread of English and, by association, the agency supporting its sustained appropriation “remains inextricably interwoven



with its economic and social origins” (Holborow, 1992, p. 358). Indeed, considering that proficiency in English is increasingly required for access and participation within key societal domains, the promotion of ELT may be interpreted as an agency of dominance (Bourdieu, 1982), with the “choice” to participate in ELL interlacing with “power struggles over what is and what is not regarded as acceptable and valuable” (Zotzmann, 2013, p. 253). Consequently, investigations into the transmission and function of ELL necessitate an appreciation of issues of identity and power that, in accordance with Pennycook (1995), “neither reduces it to a simple correspondence with its worldly circumstances nor refuses this relationship by considering language to be a hermetic structural system unconnected to social, cultural, and political concerns” (Pennycook, 1995, p. 78). In targeting contexts where the functional and symbolic influence of English is strengthened at the expense of broader language ecologies and population groups removed from the hegemonic structure of power, it is anticipated that relations between dominant and dominated groups will be publicized, specifically with regard to the resistance and accommodation of a linguistic hegemon that serves to strengthen the reproduction of social class.

## ENGLISH LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM IS STRUCTURAL

As posited by Phillipson (2011), the hierarchization of language is integral to social reproduction within the Periphery. Specifically, inequity by means of foreign language acquisition functions per the degree of access to linguistic capital – a feature of Bourdieu’s (1986) broader notion of cultural capital – which serves to privilege the agentive forces behind the increased use of English: those who typically possess the requisite social, cultural, and economic capitals to participate in, and thus benefit from, EFL instrumentalization. Accordingly, when local élites designate asymmetrical structural resources to a non-native language, the embodied dispositions, or *habitus*, of wider subaltern populations must reconcile the emergent dynamics of the linguistic market if they are to accommodate the dominant logic of the field and ultimately prove victorious in “the games of culture” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 54). In essence, this process results in “the acquisition of linguistic capital in postcolonial societies [being] structurally constrained by linguistic market forces in such a way that ‘choosing’ English is contingent rather than free”

(Phillipson, 2011, p. 449).

In the case of Korea, Jeon (2009, p. 232) notes that “English test scores play a large part in college entrance and access to employment in white-collar jobs,” whilst Song (2011) records that “over 90% of employees in manufacturing and export industries are continuously assessed for their English competence” (p. 42). Consequently, the degree of access to Korea’s vocational and educational domains is recurrently determined by the capacity of the social agent to demonstrate their aptitude for English. This pervasiveness of ELL within Korean society has resulted in what Kim (2015) terms “English fever” (p. 117), or *yeongeo yeolpung*, demonstrated by the recorded \$15–17 billion annual expenditure by Koreans on private ELL (Jeon, 2012; Kim, 2015). However, considering that Kim (2012) reported that “seventy percent of students from families earning 5 million won or more a month received private English education in 2010, fully 3.5 times the 20% from those earning less than 1 million won” (p. 3), it is apparent that ELT preserves social reproduction dynamics by limiting “access to education, socioeconomic mobility, social status, and political power” (Song, 2011, p. 42) amongst financially disadvantaged Koreans. Accordingly, Song (2011) argues:

English language education must be recognized as part and parcel of the primary “mechanism of elimination” designed, under cover of meritocracy, to conserve the established social order in South Korea. Thus, English has been “conveniently” recruited, in the name of globalization, to reproduce and rationalize the hierarchy of power relations. (p. 36)

Likewise, the degree of access to ELL within Japan is increasingly perceived as stratified, with EFL representing a highly desirable symbolic capital in “neoliberal discourses [which] emphasize that it is the responsibility of the individual to acquire the information and skills, including communication or language ability, that are considered important for the new knowledge economy” (Horiguchi et al., 2015, p. 3). Thus, ELL is positioned as a market-driven product that can be quantified and assessed via (typically learner-funded) proficiency measures, such as TOEIC, and study at elite-level educational institutions. The ten-year Top Global University Project (*Sūpā gurōbaru daigaku sōsei shien*) launched in 2014, for example, aims to foster the global

mobility of Japanese students by study abroad participation and English-medium instruction at a number of distinguished public and private universities. This initiative, along with its predecessor, the Global 30 Project is, as noted by Nowlan (2019), reactive to a push by local business and industrial sectors (including the e-commerce giant Rakuten, which drew worldwide attention in 2010 when communicating the intention to operate entirely in English) for the cultivation of transnational human capital (*jinzai*) within tertiary education.

Ostensibly, such policies evidence growth in governmental and industrial interest in the internationalization of Japanese citizens; however, as noted by Horiguchi et al. (2015) globalization reform in education “has generally been invested in a small and competitively selected top tier of society” (p. 4). For example, in response to ideologies shaping neoliberal policy enactment, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) authorized several private English immersion schools within geographically designated “special zones.” However, as noted by Poole and Takahashi (2015), tuition fees at such institutions have been shown to amount to “upwards of US \$10,000 per year per child” (p. 90). Access to desirable forms of linguistic capital thereby remains hierarchic, with the language learning requirements imposed on Japanese citizens proving realistically inaccessible to the financially disadvantaged. This dynamic calls to mind the Hiraizumi–Watanabe debate of 1974, in which Wataru Hiraizumi, a politician of the *Jiyū-Minshutō* party, proposed a restructuring of governmental ELT that would, according to Fujimoto-Anderson (2006), have resulted in ELT being available “to an *élite*<sup>4</sup> set of students” (p. 276). As with Korea, segregation of the economically disadvantaged within the sphere of language education serves to preserve an asymmetrical system of power distribution – accordingly, the criterion that would constitute linguicism is, in both instances, achieved.

That is not to say that the Japanese and Korean governments do not provide access to public EFL education. With regard to Korea, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) presently demands 68 hours of compulsory ELL per academic year for nine-to-ten-year-old learners, and 102 hours for eleven-to-twelve-year-olds (Hu & McKay, 2012, p. 350), figures that dwarf the learning alternative languages, including the regional lingua franca, Chinese. In Japan, meanwhile, English has been a compulsory high school subject since 2002; yet, a report by the Japan Forum recorded 4 percent and 11

percent of local secondary schools providing Korean and Chinese language classes, respectively – with both cases representing language learning environments that are demonstrably subtractive within the context of broader language ecologies. Phillipson (1992) labels this key tenant of ELT doctrine as *the subtractive fallacy*, which commonly converges with an emphasis on students beginning ELL at a young age within English-only classrooms – correspondingly referred to by Phillipson (1992) as the *early-start* and *monolingual* fallacies.

These ideologies are reinforced by the 1987 Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) and 1995 English Program in Korea (EPIK) initiatives, which respond to internationalization by providing sites in which the global resource of English may be achieved locally. In both instances, Anglosphere university graduates are recruited as teachers or teaching assistants to improve the English language communicative competence of learners; yet, the majority of instructors receive no specialized training in language education prior to employment. Classes are compulsory for pupils through the elementary to secondary levels and are held predominantly in English (although local teachers are often present) with L1 communication limited in such a way as to enhance inner-circle-orientated English proficiencies (Michaud & Colpitts, 2015). As a consequence, both the JET and EPIK programs represent not only Phillipson's (1992) subtractive, early-start, and monolingual fallacies, but also *native speaker* and *maximum-exposure* fallacies, which posit that "the ideal teacher is a native speaker" and "the more English is taught, the better the results" (p. 185), respectively. Or, as deftly summarized by Pennycook (1998), "English is best taught monolingually, by native speakers, as early as possible, and as much as possible, and preferably to the exclusion of other languages" (p. 158).

However, there appears an acceptance within the academic discourses of each setting that participation in the JET and EPIK programs alone is insufficient for the broader ELL goals of either state (see Horiguchi et al., 2015; Kim, 2015). Consequently, concerns regarding the effectiveness of local ELT – specifically the suitability of instructors and broader ELL syllabi (Hisoki, 2011) – have led many parents to seek private language education, the quality of which is, as previously described, reflective of the socioeconomic positionality of the learner's familial network. The degree of EFL attainment is thereby stratified not only in terms of social class but also generationally via the commodification of the private ELT market – with this circular form of

social reproduction presenting a convincing exemplar of Bourdieu's (1986) capital regulation-reproduction process. Ultimately, sustained exposure to ELL, whether in public or private spheres of education, maintains an ideologically embedded inclination towards EFL reproduction, culminating in the consolidation of ELL at the direct expense of alternative foreign languages, a process that Phillipson (2008b) terms "linguistic capital dispossession" (p. 34). Given the context presented here, it is apparent that the evolution of ELT within both Japan and Korea represents a structural imbalance that favors both English and those who use English, while simultaneously devaluing linguistic alternatives and those who do not possess the requisite forms of EFL-related capital.

## ENGLISH LINGUISTIC IMPERIALISM IS IDEOLOGICAL

The increasing prevalence of not only EFL consumption but the language's role in social reproduction is reflective of the processes by which linguistic imperialism serves to both legitimize and strengthen unequal conditions for groups based on language. This framework of dominance serves the interests of neoliberal-orientated élites via an ideological-reproduction function that presents English as a resource crucial to social advancement, modernization, development, and participation in the various domains of global interactivity. Consequently, dominant ELL ideologies have emerged as sources of contestation in the ongoing struggle to accomplish national and international interests, with EFL proficiency positioned as a highly covetable form of cultural capital, specifically with regards to economic capital conversion and the strengthening of the nation-state. This convergence of material resources and EFL instrumentalization, delivered under the veil of meritocracy, is strengthened via rhetoric that serves to reconcile socioeconomic inequality as a consequence of linguistic difference. As such, "linguistic legitimation of social inequality is highly effective, as it comes to be accepted by both the dominated and the dominant" (Piller, 2015, p. 5).

Concerning Korea, numerous governments have utilized globalization discourse to extol the benefits of ELT, most notably with reference to enhancing individual competitiveness locally and, more broadly, Korea's development and international prestige. Encouragement to learn English was fueled initially by several social and economic transitions, including

Seoul's hosting of the 1986 Asian and 1988 Olympic Games; *seggyehwa*, President Kim Young-sam's 1994 globally conscious, laissez-faire reform of the Korean political and social economies (Shin, 2010); and crucially, the 1997 Asian financial crisis. In response to Korea's enforced economic restructuring, Kim's successor, Kim Dae-jung, "forcefully embraced the core concepts of globalization like no other" (Kim, 2000, p. 84). Specifically, Kim liberalized the highly protectionist Korean economy, laying the foundations for growth in both foreign investment and human capital development, positioning ELL as a tool crucial to participation in the global economy (Song, 2011). Specifically, Kim Dae-jung intensified the internationally focused *seggyehwa* policies introduced by his predecessor by actioning ELT reforms grounded in Western-orientated educational philosophies and the promotion of Korean global citizenship – as evidenced in the ELL principles of the Seventh National Curriculum (cited in Chang, 2009, p. 88; see Table 2).

**TABLE 2. The ELL Principles of the Korean 7th National Curriculum**

| Functions of Korean ELT  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "English education for focusing on student-centeredness."</li> <li>• "English education for cultivating communicative competence."</li> <li>• "English education for utilizing various activities and tasks."</li> <li>• "English education for fostering logical and creative thinking."</li> <li>• "English education for functioning effectively as a nation in an era of globalization."</li> </ul> |

The ELL principles presented here emphasize the agency of the Korean state during the appropriation of EFL: "If Korea is to function effectively as a nation in the era of globalization, then Korean people must be able to communicate effectively in English" (Chang, 2009, p. 94). Subsequently, the habitus of the Korean social agent must reconcile the significance of English linguistic capital during navigation of the various educational and vocational fields if they are to participate in, and thus contribute to, the rapidly evolving culture of post-*seggyehwa* Korea. In keeping with the significance of ELL on both the symbolic and social levels, the 2008–2013 presidency of Lee Myung-bak sought to enact several notable policy revisions that would have further enhanced the positionality of EFL instrumentalization.

As a case in point, a feature of Lee's failed \$4.25 billion "English Education Roadmap" (as cited in Lee, 2010, p. 247) aimed to employ

English as the sole method of instruction during state-provided schooling, regardless of age, level, or subject. While this policy would face severe criticism and ultimate abandonment, the discourse employed by Lee during its justification recognized ELL as a prime determinant in the maintenance and reinforcement of Korean competitiveness. Notably, Lee described the sphere of global interactivity as a “battlefield,” with English language appropriation “a key weapon for survival” (as cited in Lee et al., 2010, p. 338) without which international competitors would surpass Korea. In doing so, Lee manipulated the Social Darwinist tradition of “survival of the fittest” to strengthen the hegemony of ELL (Lee et al., 2010, p. 342), which, Phillipson (2011) emphasizes, “leads to English being perceived as prestigious and ‘normal’... [resulting in the acceptance that] the language is universally relevant and usable, and the need for others to learn and use it” (p. 459), regardless of its tangible utility or applicability to the learner.

Likewise, the dissemination of ELT within Japan has been recurrently framed (Goodman, 2007; Kubota, 1998; Nowlan, 2019) as imbricating in the *kokusaika* (“internationalization”) reforms of the 1980s and, more recently, the notion of *gurōbaruka*, or “globalization.” While lexical differences between “internationalization” and “globalization” may appear initially semantic, it should be noted that the terms are, in this instance, somewhat distinct. Specifically, whereas *kokusaika* and *gurōbaruka* both necessitate managing and reacting to external forces, “the latter demands passive compliance with external norms that Japan is unable to control, whereas the former actively pushes back against perceived threats to Japanese identity” (Burgess, 2010). From a *kokusaika* perspective, the prominence of ELT within Japan, which indicates an outward-facing alignment with the neoliberalist ideology of human capital cultivation (Kubota, 2015), paradoxically co-exists with an inward-orientated drive for cultural protectionism.

Indeed, Japanese academics, including Tsuda (1990, 1998) and Kubota (1998), have cautioned against the black ship of ELL, arguing that its Anglosphere-centric norms represent a potential threat to both Japanese culture and her linguistic sovereignty. This response by local academics to the potentially adverse impact of EFL represents an apparent resistance to the hegemony of English; yet, given the prominence of *gurōbaruka* discourse, there has emerged a growing acceptance, on the institutional level, of the requirement to appropriate EFL to enhance global interactivity. Indeed, Torikai (2005) notes that “it

is fair to conclude in summary that the government's rationale for their decisions on the purpose and objectives of English language education is to accommodate globalization" (Torikai, 2005, p. 251).

In 2002, for example, MEXT (as cited in Hosoki, 2011) claimed in its annual report that "it is essential that our children acquire communication skills in English" (p. 199) if they are to function in 21st century Japan and secure the future development of the nation. Consequently, the similarities between the state-driven, quasi-nationalistic ELL ideologies of both Korea and Japan are manifest. In each instance, the teaching of EFL responds to external pressures by attempting to foster global human resources locally; however, one could simultaneously interpret this process as exhibiting consistency with Foucault's (1995) description of state-driven *disciplinary power*, in which educational institutions produce neoliberalist-orientated "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1995, p. 138) for insertion into local hierarchies. Thus, whilst learners are provided, to varying degrees, the linguistic skills to participate (if not necessarily succeed) in the "games of culture" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 54), they remain in subjugated positions due to the ideological foundations ELT "enhancing global capitalism dominated by multinational corporations" (Kubota, 2015, p. viii), thereby being "constituted by and [serving to] continuously reconstitute the interests of the dominant classes in society" (Piller, 2015, p. 5).

In keeping with neoliberal discourses, the orthodoxy of English as a universally applicable vehicle for communication frames educational policy enactment, with the cultivation of EFL communication skills "deemed part of the essential competence to survive in this unstable and yet globalized workforce" (Kubota, 2015, p. viii). Consequently, EFL is positioned, both structurally and ideologically, as a core feature of the recruitment and promotion strategies of various employers, with many Japanese companies basing screening decisions, in part, on the standardized EFL test scores of applicants (Hu & McKay, 2012, p. 357). Likewise, Choi (2008) remarks that Korean corporations commonly "require their applicants to submit an EFL test (e.g., TOEIC) score report and consider it an essential prerequisite for employment" (p. 41). Thus, the perceived indispensability of ELL within the educational and vocational domains has contributed to the perpetuation of EFL proficiency as a significant form of cultural and symbolic capital, thereby enhancing socioeconomic inequality and engendering linguistic elitism. In view of the gatekeeping role of English (Hu & McKay, 2012),



Periphery learners are pressured to participate in ELL to realize their vocational goals, regardless of the demand for them to apply the English language in day-to-day activity. In this regard, one must inquire as to whether ELL indeed serves the best interests of the user and, crucially, whether learners elect to participate *freely* and *agentively* in ELL.

## CONCLUSIONS

This investigation, in describing the structural and ideological foundations of ELT within Japanese and Korean contexts, has sought to address calls by Periphery scholars (Kubota, 1998) for comprehension of the impact of EFL appropriation on local social reproduction dynamics. In employing features of Phillipson's (1992, 2011) linguistic imperialism framework, it has been shown that the sustained transmission of globalization discourse has been documented, by both Japanese and Korean academics (Hosoki, 2011; Song, 2011), as a prime impetus in communicating, from the state level to the public, the symbolic worth of ELL. Specifically, post-global ELT is framed as an instrument for establishing internationalization, a resource crucial to the enrichment of cultural capital, and more broadly, national competitiveness within the various domains of global interactivity (Shin, 2010; Horiguchi et al., 2015). In keeping with the established, neoliberal-orientated orthodoxy of globalization, the human capital development strategies of both states emphasize the acquisition of English, with this structural imbalance posing a threat to the acquisition of alternative languages (Kubota, 2015) and, more damagingly, regional linguistic ecologies.

The conflation of internationalization and *Englishization* (Phan, 2013) acts not only as an instrument for responding to global pressures but as a vehicle for elite privilege reinforcement, sustaining circular forms of socioeconomic inequality on the basis of language proficiency – to the advantage of the agentive forces behind the dissemination of English, and the disadvantage of broader subaltern populations. Moreover, the overwhelming requirement to acquire English for the purposes of local empowerment has stripped language learners of agency when “electing” to participate in ELL. Thus, this comparative analysis, in interpreting the ELL dynamics described by local academics, has provided a parallel demonstration of “linguicist” devaluation (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988) and, more broadly, English linguistic imperialism.

Nevertheless, this study lays no claim to comprehensiveness and was actively constrained due to limitations of space. Indeed, given the complexity of Phillipson's framework, future investigations into Periphery EFL policy enactment should expand their analytical lens to include additional features of linguistic imperialism theory, most notably local accommodation–resistance dynamics and the impact of external, neo-colonial powers on the structuring of linguistic hierarchization within the Periphery.

## THE AUTHORS

**Chris Samuel** has been teaching English in Japan for the past nine years. He holds an MA in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and currently teaches classes in academic English and global English for use in study abroad programs. His research interests include international education, teacher autonomy, and learner motivation. Email: SamuelChris@gmail.com

**Mike Smith** is currently employed at the Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan. He is enrolled as a doctoral student at the University of Bath, holds both a teaching license and MA in applied linguistics, and is an alumnus of University College London Institute of Education, where he gained an MA with distinction in technology and education. Michael's research interests include sociolinguistics, World Englishes, international education, and CALL. Email: Michael. Dean. Smith@kwansei.ac.jp

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## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> All romanization of the Japanese and Korean writing systems employs the Hepburn and Revised Romanization of Korean systems, respectively.
- <sup>2</sup> Italics added by the authors for emphasis.
- <sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Phillipson’s (2011) pattern of activities for linguistic imperialism encompasses multiple overlapping features. However, due to both limitations of space and the desire to provide a concise analysis, the narrative of this study will focus solely on the components detailed here.
- <sup>4</sup> Italics added by the authors for emphasis.